U.S. San Antonio Arsenal, Storehouse
San Antonio Arsenal
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3175-F

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILOINGS SURVEY

UNITED STATES SAN ANTONIO ARSENAL, STOREHOUSE HABS No. TX-3175-F

Location: San Antonio Arsenal Depot, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner: United States Government.

Present Occupants: Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Agency, Oepartment of Labor, Federal Housing Authority, General Services Administration

Present Use: Federal Government offices.

Significance: During the period of Texas frontier in the 19th century, the storehouse was used for the storage of arsenal supplies and ordnance. It was also charged with issuing these supplies to all military posts and forts. This building was the first permanent storehouse and the first major building in the Arsenal.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1883.

2. Original and subsequent owners: The storehouse has been owned by the Federal Government since its construction.

B. Historical Context: At the San Antonio Arsenal, the first storehouse buildings were of wood frame construction. The present building was erected in 1883 for permanent use. Since that time the building served as the principal storehouse of the Depot until the early years of this century. In recent years the building has been renovated by the General Services Administration and is presently used by several Federal agencies for office space.

See also United States San Antonio Depot, HABS No. TX-3175, for some information on this structure.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The storehouse is a simple, well-proportioned example of military architecture whose design contrasts with the elaborate design used for most buildings of the period.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-story rectangular building measures 43'-3" X 155'-2". Nine bays define north and south elevations. Three bays define east and west elevations.

2. Foundations: The foundations are of uncoursed, ashlar limestone of local origin, extending three feet above grade. Walls of the superstructure are set-back. Crawl space vents are segmental arch openings, reinforced with a steel intrader. The vents on the east facade have been solidly filled in, but those on the west have vertical bar wooden grills.

3. Walls: The walls are constructed of uncoursed, ashlar limestone of local origin and lime mortar with raised joints. They are off-set several inches from the foundations and have a plain stringcourse at the second floor line. Tool marks are visible on these walls.

4. Structural system, framing: Load bearing perimeter walls with two parallel rows of 9-1/2" X 9-1/2" wood pier interior supports. Piers are capped with wood bolsters which support heavy wood beams running east and west (parallel to the long sides of the building). 6" steel channel angle braces are placed between posts and beams. Beams support 1-5/8" X 12" floor framing joists spaced 16" on center. The hipped roof structure consists of timber trusses of rough-hewn pine ("rough-hard" or "bull pine"), and its lower chord is built of three 1" X 8" spiked together and 1" X 6" struts, with 2" X 6" top chords and 1" round smooth iron rod for center vertical tension member. Sheathing is 1" X 12" pine.

5. Stoops: A stoop on the east side has concrete steps with metal edge and stone bulkheads. Concrete ramps, platforms, and steps are on the north and west sides.

6. Chimney: Sheet metal flue above roof.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: All openings are spanned by segmental arches with stepped extrados. The stepped outline is repeated by the frames of the openings with alternating square and rectangular blocks. The stones of the arches and frames are smoothly dressed and project from the wall face. The principal doorway is located in the center of the north facade. It is spanned by a segmental arch with stepped extrados and frames. The transom space is filled with glass with vertical wood muntins and wood frame. The

paired doors are metal, flush-type of recent date. There are two other doorways, one in each end facade, with arches and frames as described above. They are single door openings with metal, flush-type door, simple transom bar and glass transom.

b. Windows: Openings and frames are as described above. The original lower floor windows are still in place although slightly altered in recent years to prevent opening. They were in-swinging casements, three lights each, with a roundhead wood frame; metal grills on the exterior. The upper windows are also in-swinging casements, two lights each, with spring latches at the top, closet latches in the center and barrel bolts at the bottom. Masonry opening is 3'-07" x 4'-0" with a roundhead design. A metal strip, 1/2 inch thick by 2 inches wide, reinforces the intrados of the stone arch.

8. Roof: Hipped roof, standing-seam, metal covering. Two ventilating boxes with louvered sides are located on the ridge. Plain eaves have a wooden box gutter.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The original building was planned as an open storeroom without partitions on either floor. A double row of parallel wooden piers were the only obstructions in the utilization of the open floor plan.

In recent years the lower floor has been divided into various offices, numbering nineteen enclosed spaces. The offices in the west half of the building are arranged along a central hall which runs east and west along the long axis of the building. Those in the east end are arranged as a series of interconnecting spaces without a hallway.

A freight elevator occupies a central location in the building and is either original to the building or an early addition.

2. Stairway: The stair is located just west of the main entrance on the north facade and is a straight, wood, utilitarian stair in an enclosed well.

3. Flooring: The lower floors have been covered with asbestos tile in recent years. The upper floor is composed of 1"x 6" yellow pine, butt-jointed and nailed to the floor joists. The surface is unfinished.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The lower floor has been completely remodeled within recent years in order to provide office space for the several government agencies now housed therein.

The stone walls were originally unfinished on the interior with the exception of a coat of whitewash. At present, the second floor walls are in their original state, but those on the first floor have been plastered and painted.

The partition and hall walls are all 3/8" vinyl covered sheetrock, and ceilings on the first floor are modern, metal grids with "celo-tex" inserts.

5. Doors: The ground floor interior doors are modern flush-type with typical mortice locks, plated knobs and butt hinges. They measure 2' -06" x 6'-08".

6. Trim: Modern molded wood trim around all door openings. There is a pine stool for the window openings but no trim; plaster reveals.

7. Hardware: All of the original hardware has been either removed or replaced with modern pieces on the lower floor. The upper window hardware, mentioned above, is undoubtedly original.

8. Mechanical equipment:

   a. Heating, air conditioning: There is no evidence of an original heating system. The present conditioning machinery is located behind the elevator in the center of the building and consists of gas heating and air-conditioning units.

   b. Lighting: There is no evidence of an original lighting system. Presently modern hanging flourescent fixtures are used on the lower floor and have incandescent bulbs above.

   c. Fire sprinkler: Protects second floor loft space.

D. Site:

1. General orientation and setting: The Storehouse is located on the southwestern portion of the Arsenal grounds with its longitudinal axis running east to west. There are no indications of original landscaping around the building.

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1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The San Antonio project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the summer of 196B, and was made possible with funds from HABS and two sponsors, the Bexar County Historical Survey Committee and the San Antonio Conservation Society. Under the direction of James Massey, chief of HABS, the project was carried out by Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State Unversity), project supervisor, and by student assistant architects, Charles W. Barrow (University of Texas); Les Beilinson (University of Miami); William H. Edwards (University of Illinois); and Larry D. Hermsen (Iowa State University) at the HABS field office in the former Ursuline Convent buildings, San Antonio. John C. Garner, Jr., director of Bexar County Architecture Survey, did the outside work on the written documentaries. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. Dewey G. Mears of Austin, Texas took the documentary photographs of the San Antonio structures.